

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
AID-05 TRSE-00 OMB-01 HA-05 /079 W
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R 221530Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7074
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, GY
SUBJECT: REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN GENERATES MUCH SMOKE BUT LITTLE FIRE

REF: GEORGETOWN 1946

BEGIN SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER BURNHAM AND OTHER HIGH-LEVEL GOVT OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN MAKING NUMEROUS PERSONAL APPEARANCES DURING THE PAST TWO WEEKS TO DELIVER THE MESSAGE OF THE RULING PEOPLE'S NATIONAL CONGRESS (PNC) IN SUPPORT OF THE JULY 10 REFERENDUM TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION. THE GOVERNMENT OWNED PRESS AND RADIO CONTINUE TO ATTACK THE INTEGRITY OF THE OPPOSITION WHILE REFUSING TO CARRY PRESENTATIONS OF OPPONENTS TO THE REFERENDUM. THE ONLY NEW OFFENSIVE LAUNCHED BY THE OPPOSITION IN RECENT WEEKS HAS BEEN THE COURT CHALLENGE (REFTEL) TO THE REFERENDUM. END SUMMARY

1. DURING AN OPEN-AIR RALLY HELD IN GEORGETOWN NEIGHBORHOOD WHERE HE WAS BORN AND RAISED, PRIME MINISTER BURNHAM AGAIN
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STATED THAT THERE EXISTS "CONCUBINAGE" BETWEEN THOSE WHO CLAIM TO BE LEFTISTS, I.E., THE OPPOSITION PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY (PPP), AND THOSE WHO AVOWEDLY ARE RIGHTISTS, I.E., THE CHURCH, DOCTORS AND LAWYERS. THE PRIMIN REITERATED HIS PLEDGE THAT FUNDAMENTAL CIVIL LIBERTIES WILL BE ENTRENCHED IN THE NEW CONSTITUTION, AND PROMISED THAT THE NEW CONSTITUTION WILL ALSO PROVIDE FREE MEDICAL CARE FOR ALL.

2. OPPONENTS OF THE REFERENDUM WERE ALSO ATTACKED BY MINISTER OF INFORMATION SHIRLEY FIELD-RIDLEY AND MINISTER OF EDUCATION VINCENT TEEKAH DURING A YOUTH SUMPOSIUM DURING WEEK OF JUNE 12. FIELD-RIDLEY TOLD THE PARTICIPANTS THAT REFERENDUM OPPONENTS WERE OF THE OLD ORDER AND THAT OLD PEOPLE ARE USUALLY RESISTANT TO CHANGE. TEEKAH INFORMED HIS AUDITORS THAT THEY WERE NOT TOO YOUNG TO DO BATTLE WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE OLD ORDER, SUCH AS DOCTORS AND LAWYERS, AND THAT YOUTH SHOULD NOT BE "FRIGHTENED OR FOOLED WHEN THOSE REPRESENTATIVES USE 'HIGH SOUNDING' WORDS AND PHRASES SUCH AS 'HUMAN RIGHTS' AND 'DEMOCRACY'."

3. THE WEEKLY PNC ORGAN, THE "NEW NATION", CONTINUED ITS STRONG ATTACK ON REFERENDUM OPPONENTS. THE JUNE 18 EDITION OF THE NEWSPAPER PUBLISHED A LETTER COMPLAINING THAT THE EDITORIAL BOARD OF THE "CATHOLIC STANDARD" NEWSPAPER WAS COMPOSED ENTIRELY OF WHITES AND FOREIGN PRIESTS. THE LETTER URGED THAT THE FOREIGN PRIESTS BE DEPORTED. ANOTHER LETTER APPEARING IN THE SAME ISSUE OF THE " NEW NATION" ALLEGED THAT THE MONTHLY "CARIBBEAN CONTACT" NEWSPAPER WAS FINANCED BY THE CIA. (COMMENT: "CONTACT", LIKE THE "STANDARD", HAS RECENTLY PUBLISHED A NUMBER OF ARTICLES HIGHLY CRITICAL OF THE BURNHAM REGIME. END COMMENT)

4. ALTHOUGH THE TWO GUYANESE RADIO STATIONS HAVE BEEN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PROHIBITED BY THE GOG FROM BROADCASTING PAID ADVERTISEMENTS BY THE OPPOSITION, THEY CONTINUED TO BROADCAST NUMEROUS "VOLUNTARY" STATEMENTS BY PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS FAVORING THE REFERENDUM AND A NEW CONSTITUTION. IN ADDITION, THE ONE GOVERNMENT-OWNED RADIO STATION IS NOW CARRYING SHORT BROADCASTS "INFORMING" THE PEOPLE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION ON THE REFERENDUM.

5. THE OPPOSITION CONTINUES TO CHARGE THAT THE REFERENDUM WILL BE RIGGED AND THAT THE PNC IS CONNIVING TO EXTEND ITS MANDATE UNCONSTITUTIONALLY. A PPP PRESS STATEMENT OF JUNE 17 CHALLENGED THE PNC TO SHOW WHAT SPECIFIC ARTICLES OF THE CURRENT CONSTITUTION PREVENT BURNHAM AND THE PNC FROM ACHIEVING THEIR "PROCLAIMED SOCIALIST OBJECTIVES". ACCORDING TO THE STATEMENT, GUYANA'S TROUBLES ARE CAUSED NOT BY THE CONSTITUTION, BUT BY A HOST OF MALADIES INCLUDING RACISM, CORRUPTION AND "RAPACIOUS LANDLORDISM". HOWEVER, TO DATE THE OPPOSITION HAS NOT ATTEMPTED TO LAUNCH A GENERAL STRIKE, THE SUBJECT OF MANY RUMORS, OR EVEN TO MOUNT MASS DEMONSTRATIONS AND RALLIES. THE COURT CHALLENGE TO THE REFERENDUM (REFTEL) HAS BEEN STALLED FOR A WEEK ON PROCEDURAL GROUNDS ALTHOUGH AN

APPLICATION BY THE PLAINTIFFS FOR AN INTERLOCUTORY INJUNCTION
TO BLOCK THE REFERENDUM IS SCHEDULED FOR TODAY (JUNE 22).

6. COMMENT: MADE UP OF SO MANY UNLIKELY ALLIES, THE OPPOSITION HAS SO FAR LACKED THE COHESIVENESS AND ORGANIZATIONAL ABILITY TO COUNTER THE PNC MACHINE. GOVERNMENT INTIMIDATION, ALTHOUGH USUALLY NOT BLATANT, EXISTS AND IS EFFECTIVE. WHILE GENERAL DISSATISFACTION IN THE COUNTRY WITH ECONOMIC CONDITIONS CONTINUES, GOVERNMENT HAS OBVIOUSLY MADE AN IMPORTANT EFFORT TO FLOOD THE MARKET WITH THOSE COMMODITIES SUCH AS SOAP, DETERGENTS, MARGARINE AND CIGARETTES WHICH FOR WEEKS PREVIOUSLY HAD BEEN IN SHORT SUPPLY. THUS MANY OF THE QUEUES AROUND THE COUNTRY HAVE SHORTENED OR DISAPPEARED (WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE ONE OUTSIDE THE EMBASSY'S

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CONSULAR SECTION) AND THE ATTITUDE OF THE GENERAL POPULATION MAY NOW BE CHARACTERIZED AS PASSIVE OR RESIGNED.
BURKE

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